



Cornell University  
ILR School

Cornell University ILR School  
**DigitalCommons@ILR**

---

Buffalo Commons

Centers, Institutes, Programs

---

10-2-2008

## Erie County Office of Economic Development

Louise Calixte

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/buffalocommons>

Thank you for downloading an article from DigitalCommons@ILR.

**Support this valuable resource today!**

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Centers, Institutes, Programs at DigitalCommons@ILR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Buffalo Commons by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@ILR. For more information, please contact [catherwood-dig@cornell.edu](mailto:catherwood-dig@cornell.edu).

If you have a disability and are having trouble accessing information on this website or need materials in an alternate format, contact [web-accessibility@cornell.edu](mailto:web-accessibility@cornell.edu) for assistance.

---

## Erie County Office of Economic Development

### Abstract

The OED has constant challenges in getting enough financial resources. Since there is no specific budget allocation, the OED must compete with other priorities of the Department of Planning and Economic Development. Another challenge that the OED faces is complicated ownership issues, specifically with brownfields. In order to remediate the sites, legal ownership issues have to be resolved. At times, this process is arduous and time consuming.

### Keywords

Buffalo, Government, Local Government Bodies, Economic Development, Policies and Programs, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

**Erie County Office of Economic Development**  
**Louise Calixte**  
**University at Buffalo Law Student**



**What are the responsibilities of the Office of Economic Development (OED)?**

The OED provides information and assists the business community. The OED also aids in developing business websites that are used to attract and expand businesses.<sup>i</sup>

**What geographic area does the OED serve?**

The OED serves the municipalities and communities of Erie County.<sup>ii</sup>

**What are the services provided by the OED?**

- Business Liaison and technical assistance
- Business retention and expansion program
- Land development and economic development planning studies
- Brownfield and urban redevelopment<sup>iii</sup>

**How are these services provided?**

Business Liaison and technical assistance:

- The OED is a reliable source for businesses of all sizes with information to appropriate agencies for business needs and ventures. The OED has also developed online resources with information for the business community.<sup>iv</sup>



#### Business retention and expansion program:

- The business retention and expansion program strives to connect the public sector and the private sector through the means of open communication. The OED ensures communication between the sectors by personally visiting the companies at the facilities. The OED becomes familiar with the company and is able to increase awareness of local agencies that provide assistance to businesses and their needs.<sup>v</sup>

#### Land development and economic development planning studies

- The OED is responsible for developing land for industrial use. Through cooperation between municipalities and developers, the OED provides technical and financial support in the development of properties that are shovel ready. The OED also provides technical and financial support for studies that are focused on economic development planning.<sup>vi</sup>

#### Brownfield and urban redevelopment:

- The urban center and first ring suburbs are now suffering from depopulation after having had previous success in attracting industry in Western New York. Now they include many brownfields which are “abandoned or underused urban areas in which redevelopment is blocked by liability or financing issues related to toxic contamination.”<sup>vii</sup> These sites include abandoned gas stations, rail yards, and former industrial manufacturing plants. The OED offers technical and financial support to redevelop these sites.<sup>viii</sup>

#### **What department is the OED under?**

The OED is in the Erie County Department of Planning and Economic Development.<sup>ix</sup>

Edward A. Rath County Office Building

95 Franklin Street, 10th Floor

Buffalo, New York 14202

Phone: (716) 858-6170<sup>x</sup>

#### **Who runs the OED?**

Daniel D. Barry - Deputy Commissioner

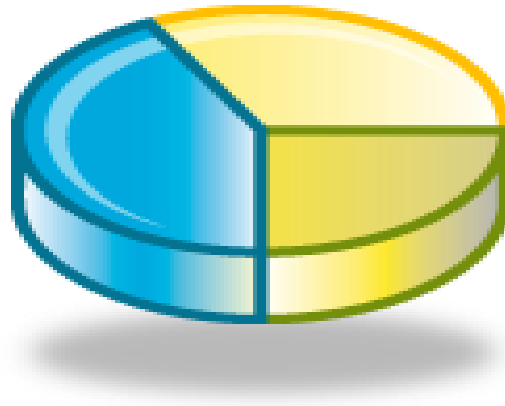
Kenneth J. Swanekamp - Director of Business Assistance<sup>xi</sup>

### **How is the OED Staff appointed?**

The OED staff is appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Economic Development.<sup>xii</sup> There is only one other staff member of the OED who serves as assistant to the Deputy Commissioner and Director of Business Assistance.<sup>xiii</sup>

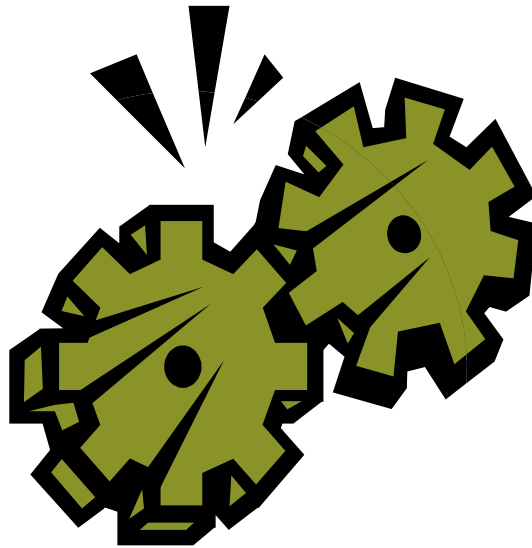
### **What is the OED's budget?**

The OED's budget is not separately allocated but comes from a total budget designated for the Department of Planning and Economic Development. Community and economic Development programs had a total budget of \$310,053,525 for the fiscal year of 2008. This total accounted for 21% of the total county budget for the year.<sup>xiv</sup>



### **Who does OED partner and/or work with?**

- Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE) is a non-profit, private business development and regional marketing organization. BNE focuses on attracting business investments in the Buffalo Niagara region. The OED works with the BNE on developing county wide policies, and on a common database for tracking information.<sup>xv</sup>
- The Erie County Industrial Agency (ECIDA) is a public benefit corporation that is part of a regional economic development team. ECIDA promotes and assists private sector industrial/business development to advance the economic welfare of the people of Erie County.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Training Alliance (WTA): Collaborative effort among funding agencies in Erie County assisting employers in meeting their employment and training needs. The Economic Development Division of the Department of Environment and Planning provides assistance to WTA on a case-by-case basis, within budgetary limits, and approval from Erie County.<sup>xvii</sup>
- Binational Tourism Alliance (BTA) is an incorporated organization made up of joint volunteer board of Canadian and U.S. directors. The BTA partners work together to develop tourism products and services in the cross- border regions.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation (BERC) supports business development and growth in the city of buffalo by assisting the private sector to create and sustain jobs in the Buffalo area.<sup>xix</sup>



### **What projects is the OED currently working on?**

**Spaulding Fibre Plant site:** Spaulding Fibre Plant was a manufacturer of leatherboard, transformer board, vulcanized fibre, Bakelite (under the trade name Spauldite) and Filawound (fiber glass) tube. The plant was located in the town of Tonawanda from 1911 to 1992. The plant was a source of economic strength and power for the citizens of Tonawanda. Spaulding Fibre was closed by its owners in August 20, 1992. Since that time, the 43 Acre plant site has become a brownfield. The OED is working with many other agencies to redevelop the site. In 2006, demolition of the site began. The OED is involved in making this site shovel ready by the end of the decade.<sup>xx</sup>

**Hanna Steel Plant:** for more than half a century, steel production was the major industry in Buffalo. However, the Hanna Steel plant in south Buffalo closing in 1982 symbolized the decline of this industry. The site has become a major brownfield that the county is taking the initiative to redevelop and remediate. The city is now in the process of cleaning up contaminated soil; “recycling” available infrastructure; luring developers away from greenfield sites and into the urban community. The other goals include boosting city commerce, jobs, the local tax base, and eliminating blight in this area.<sup>xxi</sup>

The OED’s role in these brownfield sites is to investigate different issues that may come up concerning the revitalization of the area. The OED is also involved in the demolition and remediation phases of the process by overseeing and contracting with local businesses to work on the brownfields.<sup>xxii</sup>



### **What is a typical day for the staff at OED like?**

“There is no typical day at the OED”.<sup>xxiii</sup> There are many meetings, site visits to local businesses and brownfields around the county. There are also many pay requests forms to fill out. Filling out pay requests is the process for which the OED projects are paid through county funds. Proper paperwork must be filled out for the projects and activities of the OED to be properly funded.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **What are the challenges that the OED faces?**

The OED has constant challenges in getting enough financial resources. Since there is no specific budget allocation, the OED must compete with other priorities of the Department of Planning and Economic Development.<sup>xxv</sup> Another challenge that the OED faces is complicated ownership issues, specifically with brownfields. In order to remediate the sites, legal ownership issues have to be resolved. At times, this process is arduous and time consuming.<sup>xxvi</sup>

### **How does the OED measure its success?**

The OED does not have an objective and/or operational measure of success. The Deputy Commissioner suggests that any concerned citizens can check Erie County economic statistics for general information.<sup>xxvii</sup>

### **How does the OED report to the public?**

The OED does not directly report to the public. Depending on a case-by-case basis, the OED might have to report to the Department of Planning and Economic Development.<sup>xxviii</sup>



## Where can more information about the OED be found?

More information about the OED can be found online at:

[http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)

- 
- <sup>i</sup> Source: [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>v</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>vii</sup> Source: Online Learning Center: Environmental Science Glossary: [http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0070294267/student\\_view0/glossary\\_a-d.html](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0070294267/student_view0/glossary_a-d.html)  
<sup>viii</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
  
<sup>ix</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>x</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>xi</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>xii</sup> [http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning\\_ecdev/economic\\_development.asp](http://www.erie.gov/environment/planning_ecdev/economic_development.asp)  
<sup>xiii</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xiv</sup> <http://www.erie.gov>-- see budget information  
<sup>xv</sup> <http://www.buffaloniagara.org/>  
<sup>xvi</sup> [http://www.ecidany.com/loan\\_rdc\\_annual\\_policy.asp](http://www.ecidany.com/loan_rdc_annual_policy.asp)  
<sup>xvii</sup> <http://www.becwib.org/training.asp>  
<sup>xviii</sup> <http://www.btapartners.com/>  
<sup>xix</sup> <http://www.berc.org/>  
<sup>xx</sup> [paperboardpro.com/files/Spaulding\\_Fibre\\_Brief\\_History.doc](http://paperboardpro.com/files/Spaulding_Fibre_Brief_History.doc)  
<sup>xxi</sup> <http://www.dec.ny.gov/environmentdec/18876.html>  
<sup>xxii</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xxiii</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xxiv</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xxv</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xxvi</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp  
<sup>xxvii</sup> Interview with Daniel D. Barry  
<sup>xxviii</sup> Interview with Kenneth J. Swanekamp